

COMMENCEMENT ADDRESS BY AMOS H. LYNCH Jr.

Summer Quarter Commencement

August 30, 1985

Ohio State University

Thank you President Jennings, distinguished alumni, trustees and faculty, members of the 1985 summer graduating class of the Ohio State University, families and friends of the graduates, and of the university.

Let me first express my sincere appreciation for being invited here this morning. I consider it one of the highest honors, as well as a great personal challenge.

Most of you didn't know me before Dr. Jennings made the introduction. Well, that's ok. Because I don't know most of you either.

I am Amos Lynch, general manager of the Columbus Call and Post, one of five publications of the P.W. Publishing Company of Cleveland, Ohio, and the largest circulated black weekly newspaper in the state of Ohio.

When the university contacted me about speaking to you on this occasion, I was flattered and quite proud of the invitation. I was also a bit confused as to why I had been chosen.

This position is a long way -- many steps from the 26A entrance to Ohio Stadium, where I had my first introduction to the university community as a newsman. I was a newsman, a young sportswriter, who -- because no blacks had prior to that time been admitted to the press box -- was banned to sideline coverage of football games.

I am not a giant of the newspaper industry, nor am I a household name among the more than 200,000 readers of the Call & Post newspapers. I am also not noted as a religious leader, but as a member of the Shiloh Baptist Church of Columbus, I have a great appreciation for the positive force the church has had on my life. I certainly have not endowed Ohio State in a financial way, but I am proud of my membership in the Merry Makers Club of Columbus, which has contributed more than \$46,000 to the Ohio State University Development Fund to assist national scholarship achievement students.

What I am really is a product of a community that cares, and a legion of people who have helped keep the newspapers I've been associated with over the years on the street. And to them and all those people I want to acknowledge a bit of the credit for why I am here.

I have been advised that someone at the university believes that my efforts to serve the people of this community are laudatory. I am very grateful that they think so. Since they have made that recognition, I have decided to speak to you this morning about community service.

Today, you graduates leave this institution with your varied degrees aiming for the sun; you believe that the world is yours

and there is no reason you should not feel that way. It is true -- the world is yours to mold as you will. Make a million in advertising.....see your name in lights...sign a recording contract....or a sports contract worth megabucks or attain high political office. These are all wonderful goals. However, I suggest that these should not be your only aim in life. I suggest that you have an obligation to your fellow human beings. An obligation that dictates that you give something back to your community--something from your heart.

I suspect that most of you are familiar with "USA For Africa" or "Band Aid" or recent "Live Aid" concert to benefit the starving people of Ethiopia. The people involved with these efforts were under no obligation to do a single thing--no obligation, except that of their own conscience and their hearts. Quincy Jones, Lionel Richie, Bob Geldof, Boy George, Mick Jagger...

All saw the devastating effects of hunger on men, women, and children, and freely gave of themselves to try and help those who could not help themselves. Can you do less?

Across America, there are people who live for no other purpose than to help their fellow human beings. It is not much to ask that you give a small portion of your time to people that need your help.

It would be ridiculous of me to suggest that we as individuals can help everyone, but we should reach out to those we can.

I was a student here not too many years ago, a pre-med major. In fact, for a Black American at that time, medicine was one of

the few roads open to the so-called "good life." It was and is also today considered a noble profession, one in which you could really help others. I decided that there was another way to help people. Tougher, perhaps, and less rewarding financially, but nonetheless a solid method of serving my community. I have not been disappointed by that decision. Not a single regret do I have for having chosen print media over medicine.

I am pleased with my choice, but concerned about you and your peers who face challenges easily equal to, if not surpassing, some of those of my generation. Too many people have developed a "me" state of mind. Their only interest is themselves and their careers. Well, as I said earlier, there is nothing wrong with being career oriented, but have you considered that community service can make you feel good about yourself and further your career at the same time?

For example, many of the companies here in the Columbus area participate in the annual United Way campaign. They participate not only through employee contributions, but through a program called the "loaned executive" program. A company lends an employee to United Way for a specified number of weeks and while still on the company payroll, the employee raises money to aid those less fortunate than themselves. Thus, many persons have enhanced their careers and performed a community service as well.

This should not be seen as a mercenary undertaking, although I'm sure some treat it as such. Well, I have met more than a few who were pretty proud of their fundraising efforts and others who wish they could have done a lot more.

The mixture of career development and community service are

well documented. For you future congressmen, senators, governors, business leaders, etc., a history of working for the benefit of others is almost a must. If your qualifications are limited to a college degree, time in a corporate suite, and a daily return to your suburban home, you will not have a great deal to offer the voters. However, if you add to that a stint as a Big Brother or as a member of the board of the NAACP or as a March of Dimes volunteer, then you will have a set of credentials that voters may better understand.

Our society is full of need that money and success alone simply cannot address. Despite the billions of dollars that our government has spent on poverty, job programs and health care, there are still poor and unemployed people and there are many Americans who have never seen a doctor. Many of you know little or nothing of these types of problems. I suggest that you learn about them and do what you can to positively impact on them, because they will be your problems today, tomorrow and into the 21st century.

Let me give you an example of a problem that concerns us all, black, white, Asian, Hispanic, and all other ethnic groups, and this is the perfect place to raise that point: America has a great shortage of qualified educators.

You as potential leaders of tomorrow will owe some measure of your success to educators. Without them, I dare say, your life would be considerably different. You might be a garbage collector or mechanic or janitorial worker. Don't misunderstand this. These are honest and respectable enterprises, but under the proper educational guidance, that garbage collector might

have become an architect. The mechanic might have become a design engineer and the janitor might have become a successful business executive. In many cases, somewhere in the system the presence of a skilled educator might have changed their lives. I am willing to bet that some of you can recall an educator who had that kind of impact on you. Someone who motivated you from high school into college when you really had not the plans to go. I hope that some of you will choose to render that type of service to your community.

Eventually, many of you will marry and have children. The family unit as I know it, is under assault by drugs, sundry other problems and a lack of discipline. Many young boys and girls are fatherless and/or motherless. They have essentially no positive role models to identify with. So they identify with their peers or someone who has flash and cash. They become, in many cases, a threat to you and your family. It is possible that a few hours a week with you could make a difference with such a child. The difference between a mugger and a scout, or a teenage mother and junior achiever, a drug dealer or a world-class gymnast. I offer these examples and I am sure you can think of many more. I am also sure that your families and friends have offered themselves in some unselfish manner to aid a cause. I urge you to follow their example.

The skills you develop in the work world are easily transferred to community actions and vice versa. Interaction with people has a strong tendency to breed an ability to understand the way others think. Remember, you are not alone on this planet and an understanding of the problems and feelings or

thoughts of others is a priceless asset. I can tell you from my own personal experiences that the world is full of people who never took a moment to consider another human being and it is generally reflected in their level of achievement. The world is also full of people who take their career success and use it to help as many people as they possibly can. They will tell you that it is worthwhile.

These successful people seated behind me, members of the faculty, trustees and staff of the university will tell you of the warmth they feel when one of their human charges thanks them for their encouragement and support.

I know this feeling. More than a few of my former associates, young people we have counseled, have returned to tell me of that moment in time when I had that positive effect on their lives. More than a few have returned to thank me for helping them help themselves. When it happens, I feel a special glow and despite my purported personal success, I get the greatest satisfaction from this. There is something of a confession to be made here, there is a measure of selfishness involved too--I enjoy that feeling.

Earning an income in this society is a necessity, but helping people is a conscious effort. Maybe you will make such a decision because of some event in your life or perhaps because you want to feel good about yourself. Regardless of why you make it, I can assure you that you will enjoy the feeling.

You doctors to be, please donate some time to community health clinics. Future attorneys, do a little pro bono work, and you future builders, lend your skills to community rehabilitation

projects.

It is not my intent to help set your morals for you-- I cannot. Your families and experiences have already laid that foundation. I can only tell you the direction that I have chosen.

Let me give you my thoughts on where we might be today had someone not had the vision to try and improve the lives of others. I would be shouting at you instead of speaking through a microphone. This commencement would be outside or conducted by candlelight had electricity not been pursued. We all might have arrived by horse and carriage as opposed to vehicle. For that matter we might have walked. Or to reverse the day completely, there would be no institution from which to graduate.

Now, you are thinking that in some of these examples there was a profit motive. Granted.

However, in each case there was a people motive, a desire to improve the human condition.

When some researcher, perhaps one of you, solves the riddle of cancer, not one cancer victim will ask your motive. You will have saved their life and they will say, "thank you." We can help one another on a much smaller scale, but help each other we must.

As a newsman, I have had to make many decisions on what to publish or not to publish. We have carried stories that some people would prefer not to read, but a choice had to be made on how best to benefit the community. I have regretted none of those choices. I have withheld stories that would certainly have hurt the subject, and would have been of no benefit to the public. I regret none. You will make similar decisions in your

life. Always ask yourself, "Who does it serve?"

And, finally, we remind you...it was 21 years ago, about the age of many of you in this class, that the Civil Rights Act of 1964 was passed by Congress. Most of you here have been beneficiaries of the related incentives and initiatives of federal support through financial aid which made it possible for you to graduate today. You owe something for that.

You should not be selfish to the point where you would either deride or denounce such a program by subscribing to any thoughts that we have done enough for the underprivileged, the dispossessed, and the underrepresented. You have a chance to do something about this.

Recent studies show a dangerous decline in minority student enrollment in college. Some of you know something about this unfortunate trend and you should share your concerns and knowledge about the problem with the communities in which you launch your postgraduate careers. Minority student enrollment in advanced education increased in the last decade, largely because of an involved community. Group pressure kept institutions aware of their failure to hire minority faculty members and aggressively recruit students, who, otherwise, could not have taken advantage of opportunities in higher education.

The under-enrollment of minority students nationally and here at Ohio State University, it is not just a minority community problem. It is a problem for President Jennings, the administration of the Ohio State University Summer Class of 1985, our collective families, yes, for all of society. It may take social action to remedy the situation, or at least keep it from

getting worse. The social cost of apathy and inattention to the problem is too high. Everyone must act. And everyone will benefit.

Summer Class of 1985--Congratulations. We have challenges to face, choices to make, and great opportunities to serve. I want to encourage each and everyone of you to look into yourselves deeply. Strive to produce the best efforts for you, for your family, our country and for our world.